

The Eagle

It was a hand, he said. "I will go to bed again."

"Oh how can you talk of it so coolly?" she exclaimed with heartfelt solemnity and even with horror. "Don't you know that what you have done today is very wicked? Forgive me!"

"I am not a saint, and I am not a hypocrite," she said, looking with pity at his wasted face. By the way, she talked very little of her goodness to this man; for in the first place, she supposed that he, being a foreigner, might not understand it; and secondly, she had to be so earnest with him that only the simplest words seemed suitable.

"What could I do?" he asked. "A gentleman may not be a peccator. Gentlemen were made to be good. Men were made to be good."

"Baiting was merely my fancy. I had no hope of success in it. What could I do?"

"Will you promise to come to take breakfast with me?"

"I promise—upon my honor."

"Remember, now—upon your honor! Good night."

He took her hand, and before she could guess what he meant to do, he kissed it. Notwithstanding the perfect simplicity of his manner, notwithstanding that the action was obviously a mere expression of civility and gratitude, Miss Holman, who had never before been kissed, blushed again until it seemed to her that her hair was turning scarlet. Without noticing her confusion, this rugged gentleman said sweetly "Good night," and bowed himself out of the room.

From this good night forward Janet was burdened and blessed with another labor of love. She had a suicide to reform; a soul without hope to fill with hope; a lover without love to provide with work; a lover without love to satisfy with black tea; a brand to smother from all sorts of burnings. It was not only a heavy load to carry, but a delicate one to handle. Her orphan, as she soon began to call him, must not eat in her room for fear of Mrs. Grundy. She must content herself with letting him go to cheap restaurants for his dinner, and with occasionally carrying him a cup of tea to wash down the dry bread which she knew was his only supper. As for converse, she firmly invited him to see her every Sunday evening; she sometimes dropped into his den to see his work and cheer him on with it; often still, she took a walk with him in the hall or an evening promenade in the streets.

She was proud of herself, and yet ashamed of herself. It struck her as almost indecent that she should support a man, especially a handsome one. Moreover, her labor of love was a fearful expense, compared with her small income. She was soon obliged to draw on her savings bank deposit, and that had always been kept in a consumptive state by the needs of her German lover. At first she thought of getting up a subscription for her painter, or of interesting some rich school committee in his behalf; but very shortly she took such a fancy to him that she did not want any one else to earn a claim to his gratitude; and so she went on paying out her money for his necessities. When winter arrived and fuel must be had, she bought it for him, although he tried to do without. Next came an overcoat and a pair of mittens and some heavy underclothing, because she could not bear to see her lover shiver in the street with a red nose and fingers. It was in vain for him to refuse; she absolutely forced him to take.

Meantime small profits from his brush. The picture which she had thought perfect really had but five or six days' work upon it and netted only \$25. It was of no use for her to scold the picture dealer for his sharpness, and to endeavor to move his pity by telling him the tale of the German's poverty. The man of art replied that it was not a known name; that paintings sold in the American market mainly by force of reputation; that he had his own living to make, and that he might take the money or leave it.

"If he can do a figure picture, and do it first rate," said this rational monster, "I can be more liberal with him. I hope to see many landscapes. Every American artist can make landscapes."

On this hint Ernst commenced a figure picture. It was his forte; he had simply tried a landscape because he had judged that to be the favorite genre in America; he had known that with him the hope existed in it. A beautiful figure was soon sketched, representing a scene from King Philip's war, the interior of a cabin, lighted by its own flames, a beautiful girl in the grasp of Wampanoag warriors, a father and brother struggling manfully against her captors, and in the next background, faintly seen through the shattered door, a coming relief of Puritan riders. Janet Holman, the patriotic New Englander, was delighted with what she thought already a perfect success, and wanted to sell it at once.

"No," judged Ernst. "I cannot afford to waste my impressions. This is the most difficult part of the painting, though the quickest. But it will need a long time to make it good enough. It will need all winter." He concluded, with a pitifully apologetic look at Janet, "Go on," she said, flushing with the noble heart beat of self-sacrifice as she caught sight of this mute appeal. "This time I know you will triumph. We can live till it is done."

"Heaven bless you!" he replied, taking her hand and kissing it by force. "You are the noblest woman upon the earth."

The kiss and the praise brought a deeper blush than one often sees on such a pale, sorrowful face as that of Janet. For we must come now to a weighty secret; we must make an avowal of the most tragic part of the story. Janet Holman, the patriotic New Englander, was delighted with what she thought already a perfect success, and wanted to sell it at once.

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never met a sweeter and finer nature. She comprehended at last that even his attempted suicide was a proof of his high self respect and sense of honor, inasmuch as it was an effort to escape from the degradation of living by incurring debts which he could not discharge. That stoical declaration, "If I could but hold my room rent I would have gone on another month," seemed to her now something like a patent of nobility. Unaware of her own grandeur of character, she worshipped his grandeur of character. Finally she worshipped his genius, which had begun to show her the universe of glory that there is in art, and which was able to seize ideas scarcely perceptible to her unpracticed aesthetic vision, and place them before her in the resurrection robes of drawing and color.

At last she was desperately in love with him, and she could not help admitting it to her accusing conscience, and could not put aside the scornful finger of her sense of womanly shame. But did he know it? As yet she was sufficiently honest to hope that he did not. Although she could not meet him without feeling blush run through her whole face, although his praises and the touch of his hand made her tremble from head to foot, she trusted that she was keeping her fiery secret. And so she was a young man does not care to suspect that a woman, after ten years his senior has a passion for him; and if Ernst noticed her tremors and changes of color, he imputed them to womanly delicacy and Puritan shyness.

While Janet, locked in her own room, was looking in the glass at her pale face, high cheek bones, square jaw, straight mouth, and incipient wrinkles, while she was wishing with both tears and shame that all that supportable plainness were beauty and youth, he steadily at work, did not think of her at all, or only thought of her in his "great" German hand and countenance, now pink and white in color as well as classic in outline, was not shadowed by the slightest cloud from the fires of love, unless indeed he remembered now and then his lost Jungfrau in fairland.

About the time that "The Rescue" (as Janet christened the scene from Philip's war) reached its finishing point, Ernst encountered an American artist named Stanley. Stanley was a portrait painter in high fashion, who made \$6,000 a year and spent it all on himself and some poor relations. Two generous and soft-hearted to save money, he wanted to study in the galleries of Europe without overhauling the first spare dollar for the voyage, and talked of launching into genre pictures or "high art" without ever being able to give up his job of painting portraits. The result of this existence, acting upon this kindly spirit, was that while Stanley carried the chances of more famous artists, he honestly admitted their productions.

Meeting Ernst at the Academy, he fell into chance conversation with him, liked his naive and badly pronounced but judicious criticisms, went with him to his lodgings and fell in love with "The Rescue." His fond face flushed crimson with enthusiasm as he exclaimed: "By Jove! you are on the road to fame. You needn't have apologized for your room. This picture furnishes it like a palace. I wish I was a poor devil. I wish I could live in this style and try to do something good. But I can't. I must dress in a certain way and go to certain parties and live in a certain quarter. If I didn't I should lose my run among certain people. And then," he added, as he thought of his mother and aunt, "then there would be trouble."

"Theodore," Stanley came often to Ernst's room to watch the progress of "The Rescue" and to tell him that it was sure of success. It was not long, either, before he gave the young German another startling piece of information.

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never upon marriage except when you wish it. You must chide for yourself when it will be prudent."

At this moment Janet caught a view of herself in her mirror. Flashed with joy and love, she looked almost handsome, and it seemed to her that she was young and desirable. Drawn by Ernst's pitying embrace, she believed that she was the embrace of affection, and she let her head fall upon his shoulder with the words, "Oh, my darling!"

Thereafter they were engaged, though Ernst would have married nothing of the kind could say, not even the old and wise (only half wise) Janet. With her, life was a delicious dream, forgetful altogether of the hard past and careless of the doubtful future. With him, life was a point of honor and of duty, an obedience to self respect and a rendering of obligations. His ways were naturally so caressing, and he was so conscientiously assiduous in his attentions to her, that he thoroughly deceived even the suspiciousness of her humble and shy heart. He was a man who was completely in her affection, amazing as the acquisition seemed to her, and much as she doubted her worthiness of it. It is quite possible that there was not at that time in New York a happier woman than this almost penniless old maid, betrothed to a young artist who was encumbered with debts, and who did not love her. Such are the joys of this world; half of them, at least, delusions; the other half transitory.

At last "The Rescue" was sold. Stanley went with Ernst to the picture dealer, demanded, with much pomp of manner, a private audience; exposed the canvas in the best light, and asked \$500 for it.

"It is worth it," confessed Mr. Molcan. "Only there is no name. If you would put your name on it, Mr. Stanley, I would sell it for \$1,000."

"Yes, but you are known. It would sell the picture."

"Give him the name," interposed Ernst, with the eagerness of a beggar grasping at air.

"It is a downright swindle," said the generous American. "I couldn't do such a group to save my life. I won't take the credit of it."

"Both names!" suggested the dealer in genius.

"I was agreed to; the picture went on the market as the joint production of Stanley and Hartmann. The latter, perfectly satisfied, and indeed overjoyed, pocketed the \$500; the former, in spite of his private disclaimers, pocketed something considerable in the way of gratuity. At Ernst's request Janet Holman had kept a strict account of her expenses in his behalf; and although he had used sharp economy, the balance against him amounted to \$430. On reaching home, he went to his room, gazed at the picture with childish joy in the smile of anxiety, and tossed the sum of his earnings into his lap. Instead of hailing his good fortune with gladness, she seemed to shrink from the money, laid it coldly on a table, rose to her feet with a pale face, and said in a strange voice, "Well—you are free."

"No, my dear Chanet," he replied. "I am your slave."

"That is not what I want," she stammered, trembling visibly. "I cannot submit to be your slave. I am free. You, Hartmann, it is my duty to tender you your liberty."

"My darling Chanet, what does this mean?" asked Ernst, putting his arm around her waist and drawing her to him.

"My self respect impels me to it," she said, beginning to cry. "I cannot live with you as your slave. I am free. You, Hartmann, it is my duty to tender you your liberty."

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both tender and somber, his soul in other words, and lastly, she was in love with you."

Janet turned pale.

Does the reader divine what she forebode?

Well, it happened.

Ernst's heart was empty. Janet did not inhabit it; and not even entered it. The unnamed girl whom he had loved in Prussia had by heroic efforts been so far expelled from it that he did not desire ever again to see her. But her former residence there had so molded the abode that any one who resembled her could seize upon it, occupy it, and fill it.

What now happened to the young man was apparently love at first sight, but was really no more than the transferring of an old love to a new object. A week after he met Nellie Fisher, the thought of her first love with its delicious memories, while the thought of his troth plight to Janet Holman was sufficient to make him meditate once more upon suicide.

And the girl? He and she met every day, and two or three times a day. In spite of his conscientious efforts to conquer his love, he met her in his studio, ward her a tenderness, which, reinforced by his beauty, his graceful address, and the glamour of his artistic ability, could not but move the heart of a child of 19, who had never before seen a fine admirer of her beauty. Nellie began to flutter at sight of him, and to pet him in spite of her flutterings.

"Isn't he charming?" she said to her cousin.

"Do you think so?" replied Janet, half gratified and half anxious.

"I really like him all right now. I thought it ridiculous at first."

"So did I," confessed Mr. Molcan. "Only there is no name. If you would put your name on it, Mr. Stanley, I would sell it for \$1,000."

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"You are so kind—no exclamation."

"Well, she will soon be in love with you," said Janet, with a last supreme effort. "Take her. Make her happy."

She had been leaning away from him. She now turned, with the revulsion of a billow, threw her arms around his neck, covered his face with kisses and tears, and then once more leaned back from him to look at him.

"That is the end of all between us," she said, in a hoarse, deep voice, totally unlike her usual utterance. "Henceforward I shall do my duty, and you must help me do it. One thing—never tell Nellie this; it would darken her happiness. And now—good-by."

She dragged herself away from him, ran down stairs, and looked herself in her room.

"An Gott!" murmured Ernst, left to himself. "I shall lose a heart worth ten thousand of mine. But it is better. She is wiser. I could not love her. I should end by making her unhappy as now—and more so. She is wise for us both."

The next day, to the astonishment and annoyance of Nellie Fisher, but by the positive direction of Mr. Holman, the two women removed from their lodgings to a cheap boarding house. There was, however, one good thing about the change: the boarding house had a parlor where Mr. Hartmann could be received with a sense of spotless propriety, and, what was delightful, he always had to be received by Miss Fisher, the elder cousin excusing herself on pretense of business, illness, etc. One can easily see that all this had to end in a second troth plight, and that the parties to it could not be other than Ernst and Nellie. It was "petter" youth must have youth; love must have love. In these bargains mere respect and gratitude are not a fair exchange for the unreasoning, instinctive, potent impulse of the heart.

Almost the first use of the Nellie made of her betrothal was to run down to Ernst's studio; entirely, she declared, to look at the new picture; but mainly, no doubt, to look at the artist. She, too, like Janet before her, observed a change in the personages of the little drama. She had never known that her fiancé had been so obliterated, and she did not discover it now, for it had been restored in all its beauty. But in the face of one of the principal female figures, a face which, though not absolutely handsome, was shining with an expression of noble and tender resignation—in this face, which looked up to heaven as if it had descended from thither, Nellie recognized the countenance of Janet Holman.

"Why! you have got in Cousin Jennie, too," exclaimed the delighted girl. "Oh, you creature! you have made her finer than me!"

"I wanted to signify the baiting," said Ernst, simply, "with the portrait of the best woman in the world."

"Isn't she?" replied Nellie, pressing her face gratefully against his shoulder. "I am so glad you do her justice. I love everything to her. Oh! I wouldn't cause her a grief for the world."

The picture having been sold to Molcan for the large sum of \$750, it was decided that Ernst's prospects of success were good enough to justify marriage, and Janet ruled that Nellie must go home for that purpose to the residence of an old aunt in Connecticut.

The girl having departed, Janet felt able to have an interview with Hartmann, not with the object of indulging in any weak reproaches or remonstrances, but to bid him a last farewell. She was going to Ceylon, she informed him, as English teacher in one of the schools of the American Board of Foreign Missions.

"Oh! I wouldn't cause her a grief for the world," he said.

"Oh, it is so far!" implored the young man. "If you must go away, let it be still in this country. There is the Freedmen's Bureau schools in the south."

"People return from the south," she replied. "I must go whence I shall never return."

It was the only complaint, the only cry of despair that was uttered by this martyr, at least in human ears.

When Stanley heard of Miss Holman's proposed departure he said to Ernst in surprise:

"I thought she was to be your mistress. Well, she is coming to take the money. Oh, you clever dog. You know the difference between an old maid and a new one."

"See here," said the German, with solemnity. "I do not want you, one of my best friends, to despise me, and I want you to respect Miss Holman as she ought to be respected. I will do you everything, and you must do me none."

Before he had half finished his story of the broken engagement Stanley rose from his seat, dropped his cigar and walked up and down the room, rubbing his eyes with his hands just as an angry boy.

"By Jove," he exclaimed, when the narrator had ceased. "If she wasn't in love with you, I'd be tempted to marry her myself. She's not a chicken, and she's not a beauty, but she's pure gold."

"She is a perfect lady and a grand gentleman in one," said Ernst.

The agencies of the board sent Janet off to Ceylon before the marriage. Hartmann and Stanley accompanied her as far as the Narrows, and then from the dock of the tug watched her as she leaned over the railing, waving farewell to friends and native land.

As the lonely figure of this loving, self-sacrificing, heroic, sublime martyr faded from their sight the German said: "God bless her! And the American added, with his eyes full of tears: "Sancta Chanet, ora pro nobis!"

"Oh, don't!" implored Janet, looking up at him in despair, for he was wasting her almost beyond her strength. After a moment, rallying all the power of her soul, she said: "See me, Ernst, I shall be with you. Do you love me better than you love any one else?"

How could he have the seeming cruelty to answer her? "No!" He did what most gentle hearted men would have done—he told her a plying, self-sacrificing falsehood. He said, "I do."

She tore herself away from him and attempted to rush out of the room.

"Chanet! Chanet!" he called, springing after her and seizing her in his arms. "It must not be so. You are the noblest woman on earth. I worship you. I cannot love any one else."

"Oh, don't!" implored